WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image processing method for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, comprising:

a passing through deleting step of deleting a passing through area from said photographed image;

a preparing step of preparing a projection from the image from which said passing through area is deleted; and

a setting step of setting a characteristic area of said photographed image based on a result of said projection.

2. The image processing method according to claim 1, further comprising a binarizing step of binarizing the photographed image from which said passing through area is deleted, wherein in said preparing step, the projection of said binarized photographed image is prepared.

3. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein in said preparing step, a weighting processing is performed in accordance with an input pixel value.

4. The image processing method according to claim

1, wherein in said preparing step, a weighting processing is performed in accordance with an input pixel position.

5. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein in said setting step, said characteristic area is set in accordance with a shape of said projection.

6. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said object comprises a cervical vertebra.

7. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said characteristic amount for said characteristic area is used to perform a gradation conversion processing.

8. An image processing method for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, comprising:

a preparing step of preparing an outside outline of said object from said photographed image;

a first setting step of setting a characteristic area of said photographed image from said outside outline;

an analyzing step of analyzing a density

distribution of said photographed image;

a second setting step of setting the characteristic area of said photographed image from said density distribution; and

a third setting step of setting the characteristic area in said photographed image based on a result of said first setting step and/or a result of said second setting step.

9. The image processing method according to claim 8, wherein in said third setting step, the results of said first and second setting steps are compared, and the result of said first or second setting step is selected.

10. The image processing method according to claim 8, wherein in said third setting step, calculation is performed in accordance with the results of said first and second setting steps to set the characteristic area in said photographed image.

11. An image processing method for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, comprising:

a passing through deleting step of deleting a passing through area from said photographed image;

a calculating step of calculating an average pixel value of a predetermined axis direction from the image from which said passing through area is deleted; and

a setting step of setting a characteristic area of said photographed image based on a shape of a result of said calculating step.

12. The image processing method according to claim 11, further comprising:

a preparing step of preparing a profile with respect to an axis direction different from said predetermined axis direction; and

a setting step of setting said characteristic area based on said profile and said average pixel value for a site which is to be observed in said object.

13. The image processing method according to claim 11, further comprising a gradation conversion processing step of performing a gradation conversion processing in accordance with said characteristic amount.

14. The image processing method according to claim 11, wherein in said passing through deleting step, the passing through area is deleted in accordance with conditions which are set in accordance with a density distribution of said photographed image.

15. The image processing method according to claim 11, wherein said object comprises a cervical vertebra.

16. An image processing apparatus for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, comprising:

passing through deleting means for deleting a passing through area from said photographed image;

preparing means for preparing a projection from the image from which said passing through area is deleted; and

setting means for setting a characteristic area of said photographed image based on a result of said projection.

17. An image processing apparatus for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, comprising:

preparing means for preparing an outside outline of said object from said photographed image;

first setting means for setting a characteristic area of said photographed image from said outside outline;

analyzing means for analyzing a density

distribution of said photographed image;

second setting means for setting the characteristic area of said photographed image from said density distribution; and

third setting means for setting the characteristic area in said photographed image based on a result of said first setting means and/or a result of said second setting means.

18. An image processing apparatus for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, comprising:

passing through deleting means for deleting a passing through area from said photographed image;

calculating means for calculating an average pixel value of a predetermined axis direction from the image from which said passing through area is deleted; and

setting means for setting a characteristic area of said photographed image based on a shape of a result of said calculating means.

19. A recording medium for storing an image processing program for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, said program comprising:

a passing through deleting step of deleting a passing through area from said photographed image;

a preparing step of preparing a projection from the image from which said passing through area is deleted; and

a setting step of setting a characteristic area of said photographed image based on a result of said projection.

20. A recording medium for storing an image processing program for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, said program comprising:

a preparing step of preparing an outside outline of said object from said photographed image;

a first setting step of setting a characteristic area of said photographed image from said outside outline;

an analyzing step of analyzing a density distribution of said photographed image;

a second setting step of setting the characteristic area of said photographed image from said density distribution; and

a third setting step of setting the characteristic area in said photographed image based on a result of said first setting step and/or a result of said second

setting step.

21. A recording medium for storing an image processing program for extracting a characteristic amount of a photographed image from the photographed image obtained by photographing an object, said program comprising:

a passing through deleting step of deleting a passing through area from said photographed image;

a calculating step of calculating an average pixel value of a predetermined axis direction from the image from which said passing through area is deleted; and

a setting step of setting a characteristic area of said photographed image based on a shape of a result of said calculating step.